

Felician Teacher Helps People Discover the Healing Power of Having an Angel

By **JOHN DYER**
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LODI -- In medieval times, scholars debated how many angels could fit on the head of a pin. Nowadays, some tell their students to stop counting and introduce themselves.

Maggie Liebmann, who teaches a class called Healing Angels of the Energy Fields at Felician College, uses angels to show people how to heal themselves, a process that involves meditation. The technique is part of a growing trend that uses spirituality to supplement traditional counseling and medicine.

Liebmann's personal angel, named Sarah, has helped her overcome her fear of speaking out for herself, a fear she acquired growing up in an abusive household, she said. Although, she points out that the concept of an angel having a name is somewhat incorrect.

"Those are the names that they gave us that they should be named by," she said. "Because we as humans beings have a need to refer to them with a name, whereas they see themselves as one angel."

Liebmann encountered some skepticism when she first pitched the class to Felician officials. "I have to be very careful, because it seems so New Age," she said. "It could be seen as against the Catholic tradition so I choose my words carefully when I speak to them."

Even Liebmann's husband doubted she could make contact with angels, until one day when he sat with her while she meditated. Afterward, she said, he felt her hands and was amazed by how hot they were. She told him that the heat was a sign of the Sarah's power.

Once the sick or injured become familiar with their personal angel, they can access their angel's energy, Liebmann said. She teaches that this energy, transferred by a connection between the person and angel called the golden cord, can heal them faster than if they rely solely on ordinary medicine.

"You allow gratitude and love to go up the golden cord and the angel sends back 10 times as much love and wisdom," said Liebmann, who swears that her connectedness with Sarah allowed her to overcome the effects of breast cancer, including a complete mastectomy.

Doctors told her not to work for eight weeks after her breast reconstruction operation six months ago. But she said by communicating with her angel, she felt completely back to normal in six weeks.

Liebmann doesn't see her work as putting any doctors out of practice, however. "Never do we suggest that you don't go the traditional route," she said. "We suggest you do this in addition to it."

Traditional counselors warn that people looking for healing outside mainstream practices should be careful about what they expect from alternative treatments. There is nothing wrong with people believing in angels, especially if their faith helps them overcome illness in any way, said Mike Remshard, Director of Health, Wellness and Counseling at William Paterson University. But he cautioned that anyone seeking treatment from a therapist whose practice involves angels should make sure that therapist is either licensed with the state, accredited with a professional association, or both.

Many therapists have a spiritual side to their practice, and angels shouldn't be dismissed as an irrelevant aspect of someone's healing process, he said. Pastoral counselors incorporate religion into their work. For example, on Dec. 8, millions of Catholics celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which commemorates the moment when an angel visits Mary, a virgin who becomes pregnant.

A patient should dictate the levels to which angels are discussed in a counseling session, Remshard said. For some, thinking about an angel might be therapeutic. For others, especially those suffering from mental illness, it might be disastrous.

"If I'm working with someone who's having delusions to begin with, then having them have fantasies of angels is not the best," Remshard said. "But if someone's going through a hard time in their lives, that's another thing."

Ginger Grancagnolo, who has lectured at schools in Lyndhurst and maintains a counseling practice in Belleville, said she uses angels as something her patients visualize during meditation.

"It's a neutral way of helping people," she said. "The images trigger the lonely mind to say 'I'm not alone. There's more help than I know.' It's artistic."

Angels are a viable option for people seeking psychological and physical care because most traditional doctors are not trained on how to handle the spiritual aspects of their jobs, said Ruth Harrison, who teaches a course titled Spiritual Dimensions in Nursing at William Paterson University.

She teaches her students to help their patients deal with the questions that often rise from experiencing death or sickness, questions like, "Why did God give me cancer?" or "How can there be a God if he's allowed my child to die?"

Most doctors don't know how to address those concerns, she said. As a Catholic, Harrison said she identifies with the concept of angels, but she wouldn't think of bringing up the issue with a patient in, say, a cancer ward.